

EDITORIAL

Time for Unification

THIS IS THE MONTH when the unification of the medical and osteopathic professions in California becomes a reality, ending more than 20 years of effort by representatives of both professions.

Members of the California Medical Association have been kept abreast of the unification program by presidential letters which have given the latest progress. Up-to-date reports on some of the steps in this progress are set down here as a matter of review for those who have followed the course of events and for the information of those who may have overlooked the earlier communications.

On the educational side, the former osteopathic college in Los Angeles has changed its name legally to California College of Medicine and has received accreditation as a medical school from the Council on Medical Education and Hospitals of the American Medical Association and from the Association of American Medical Colleges.

The new medical college will be headed by a dean who is experienced as former dean of the University of Arkansas Medical School, Doctor Benjamin Wells. Doctor Wells has risen to the challenge presented in creating a topflight faculty and starting off a new medical school under 1962 conditions.

The school has also issued a number of M.D. degrees. First to receive this degree were the members of the faculty, who were suggested by the accrediting agencies as entitled to the degree as teachers at an accredited medical school. Also granted the M.D. degree were the members of the 1962 graduating class, the first students to be so honored.

By the time this issue of CALIFORNIA MEDICINE is in the hands of its readers, additional M.D. degrees will have been issued to a number of members of the California Osteopathic Association whose records have been examined and who are considered eligible for the honor. The conferring of these

degrees will take place on July 14 and 15, at which time each group receiving the new degree will be given a welcome to the ranks of organized medicine and a brief orientation program.

Legislatively, several bills have been adopted by the State Legislature and signed into law. One of these measures requires that any physician who has held the D.O. degree and subsequently has received the M.D. degree shall notify both the Board of Medical Examiners and the Board of Osteopathic Examiners of his election to practice under one degree or the other. He will not be allowed to practice under both. His election will then determine the proper state board to exercise jurisdiction over him.

Administratively, the former California Osteopathic Association is changing its legal name to Forty First Medical Society. It will be granted a charter by the California Medical Association under the new name. Its members will be all those M.D.'s formerly affiliated with the C.O.A. who have elected to practice under the Board of Medical Examiners and have elected to join the Forty First Medical Society of the California Medical Association.

The bylaws of this society provide that its members may be located in any county of California and shall not be eligible to join any of the existing county medical societies until the Forty First gives permission to do so as a means of dissolving the society. The move is expected to require several years' time as a settling down period.

With the granting of a charter, the Forty First Medical Society may then report its membership to the California Medical Association and qualify for the appropriate number of C.M.A. Councilors and members of the House of Delegates. Thus the new society will have proportionate representation from its very beginning.

The California Medical Association has worked hand in hand with the California Osteopathic Association toward complete unification. Members of committees of both associations have labored long

and hard toward this end. The educational and legal advisors of both groups have done yeoman work in establishing a proper educational atmosphere and in looking ahead at all aspects of the law which might affect the unification program.

There remains one more step to make this program complete—the affirmative vote of the people of California on Proposition 22 in the November statewide general election. This proposition provides, in brief, for the cessation of further osteopathic licenses, for assumption of control over all M.D. licenses by the Board of Medical Examiners and for the continuation of supervisory powers by the Board of Osteopathic Examiners until such time as not more than 40 licentiates are still under the osteopathic board's jurisdiction.

If the unification program and the aspirations of all those associated with it are to be fulfilled, this proposition must be approved by the voters. Toward this end, plans have already been made for a positive and aggressive campaign to insure the passage of Proposition 22. Committees have been appointed to work jointly, all public relations facilities of both organizations have been marshalled, a campaign director has been selected and the raising of needed funds has been planned. All members of the

Association should throw their weight behind this campaign.

There will be opposition to this proposition, emanating from national osteopathic headquarters and represented locally by a small group subservient to the national organization. The efforts of these opponents must be more than matched if a satisfactory vote is to be achieved.

One problem in this effort—which is also one of the major reasons for the unification—is the public misunderstanding of the points of similarity or difference between the M.D. and the D.O. degree. In some states of our country, an osteopath is severely limited in his license and does not have the professional stature that he has in California. Voters who have come here from areas where that is the case may not understand that in California the two groups have been practicing along parallel lines, under the same state laws, for the past 40 years.

If this misunderstanding is to be erased, much work must be done. Both the C.M.A. and the C.O.A. (Forty First Medical Society) are gearing up for the campaign ahead. All members will be asked to do their share. The citizens of California are entitled to the advantages inherent in this unification. We must not let them remain uninformed. We must not let them down.

